



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## PLANNING REPORT

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GREG COX  
First District

DIANNE JACOB  
Second District

PAM SLATER-PRICE  
Third District

RON ROBERTS  
Fourth District

BILL HORN  
Fifth District

**DATE:** May 13, 2009

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**SUBJECT:** PROGRESS REPORT ON THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE (District: All)

### SUMMARY:

#### Overview

This report provides a summary of the progress that has been made by the Department of Planning and Land Use on the General Plan Update during the past year. Additionally, it presents major issues associated with the project that have been raised by stakeholders and provides an opportunity for the public and Board of Supervisors to provide comments on the project as it progresses.

#### Recommendation(s)

##### CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Receive this report

#### Fiscal Impact

N/A

#### Business Impact Statement

N/A

#### Advisory Board Statement

The General Plan Update is served by two advisory committees: the Steering Committee and the Interest Group. Multiple meetings have been held with both these committees and meeting minutes are available on the General Plan Update website: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/gpupdate/committees.html>.

### BACKGROUND:

In early 2008, the Department of Planning and Land Use (DPLU) presented an updated project schedule for completion of the General Plan Update in Fall 2010. Since then, significant progress has been made and the project remains on schedule. The next critical milestone, public review of the draft Environmental Impact Report, will occur in the next months.

# FINAL

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**PROJECT PROGRESS:**

During the past year, staff's efforts have focused on the preparation of the two major documents for the General Plan Update project: the General Plan and the General Plan Environmental Impact Report.

**General Plan Document**

Preparation of the General Plan followed a process that was developed as part of the project work plan prepared in early 2008 with the planning/environmental consultant. That process consisted of completing initial drafts of the elements and then coordinating with internal and external specialists for their review and input. Once all elements underwent technical review, a consolidated draft document was assembled for review by the advisory groups, public agencies, and other stakeholders. The draft General Plan was made available for general public review on November 14, 2008. Comments on the documents were accepted through the end of January 2009 for a review period of 77 days. A total of 88 comment letters were received. Copies of all comment letters, as well as the draft General Plan, are available on the General Plan Update website.

Staff is now working on revising the General Plan as a result of the comments and preparing written responses. The responses and the revised General Plan will be made available for review at the same time that the draft Environmental Impact Report is made available. At that time, other important components of the General Plan will also be available for review. These include the revisions to the community and subregional plans, and the General Plan Implementation Plan.

**Environmental Impact Report**

Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report is an iterative process requiring several cycles of review due to its complexity and volume. As previously reported, a number of alternatives are being analyzed for the Environmental Impact Report including: the Existing Conditions, the No Project (Existing General Plan Build Out), the Proposed Project (Referral Map), the Draft Land Use Map, the Hybrid Map, the Environmentally Superior Map, in addition to the Cumulative Project analysis. Initial modeling and analysis for these scenarios was completed in early 2009, which allowed for completion of the first internal draft (or screencheck) of the Environmental Impact Report. A second screencheck of the draft Environmental Impact Report was completed February 27, 2009, and staff and the consultant are now working on revisions to that draft. Once completed, the draft Environmental Impact Report will be made available for a minimum 60-day public review and comment period. This review period is anticipated to commence in late Summer 2009.

**Conservation Subdivision**

Recent progress has also been made on the Conservation Subdivision concept, a component of the General Plan Update intended to facilitate compact residential design (such as clustering) in order to set aside areas of open space to preserve natural resources and agriculture. Staff developed a simplified approach to this concept which was presented to the advisory groups in June 2008. In May 2009, the advisory groups were presented with a detailed proposal for the ordinance amendments required to enact the concept and a rural subdivision design and

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processing manual to assist applicants with the requirements. The Steering Committee has remained adamant in its position that clustering should not be allowed by-right. The current draft reflects this direction by requiring a Lot Area Averaging Administrative Permit or Planned Residential Major Use Permit (which both require findings of compatibility) to alter minimum lot size restrictions.

**PROJECT ISSUES:**

As with the previous project updates, staff has identified significant issues raised recently by stakeholders so that the issue and the method for addressing the issue is clearly communicated. These and other issues are described in greater detail in the comment letters on the draft General Plan available on the General Plan Update website.

**Role of Community Character**

A continuing subject of debate is on the role of community character in the implementation of the General Plan Update. Many of the communities want assurances that their unique identities and individual character are maintained. As a result, the draft General Plan contains numerous references to ensuring consistency with community character when reviewing development and creating new plans and policies. However, some stakeholders such as the Building Industry Association and Endangered Habitats League are concerned that this tie to existing community character will interfere with implementation of the General Plan Update, especially Conservation Subdivisions. Recommendations for addressing this range from mandating design aspects, such as smaller lot size, to minor language modifications. While staff is considering some minor language changes, it maintains that the objective of “consistency with community character” is a creditable one. Staff believes that Conservation Subdivisions and some high-density developments can be developed in a manner consistent with community character through careful design and collaboration with communities.

**Proposed Density Decreases**

Concerns continue to be expressed by various groups and property owners over the proposed changes in land use designations that will result in lower density designations on certain properties when compared to existing designations. Many of these concerns are accompanied by suggestions of improprieties (i.e. property takings, lack of notice, inaccurate background data, resulting project inconsistencies) and/or undesirable consequences (i.e. economic failure of communities, loss of tax revenue, inability to create self-sufficient communities). Staff appreciates the concerns that have been raised by these stakeholders and has researched and considered all of these points. However, through this process no concerns have been identified by staff that warrant a recommended change in the overall project approach.

Staff continues to receive inquiries regarding equity mechanisms associated with the General Plan Update. Many individuals and some community groups have expressed that their previous support of the downzoning proposed by the General Plan was based on the understanding that a broader equity mechanism would be developed. Staff’s position has remained consistent with what has previously been reported to the Board, which is that the only equity mechanism currently being pursued is a purchase of development rights (PDR) program for agricultural lands.

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**Senate Bill 375 – Sustainable Communities Legislation**

In 2008, the State legislature passed Senate Bill (SB) 375. SB 375 requires the California Air Resources Board (ARB) to develop regional greenhouse gas emission reduction targets to be achieved from the automobile and light truck sectors for 2020 and 2035. Regional planning organizations, such as SANDAG, throughout California will prepare a "sustainable communities strategy" to reduce the amount of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in their respective regions and demonstrate the ability for the region to attain ARB's targets. There is widespread speculation on how SB 375 will or should affect the General Plan Update. To date, there is no indication that the General Plan Update will require modification. Staff is coordinating with SANDAG, monitoring the implementation of the legislation, and will advise the Board if revisions are necessary. SANDAG is not expected to release the draft sustainable communities strategy until late 2010.

**Linkage to the County of San Diego's Strategic Plan**

The General Plan Update is consistent with the County's Strategic Initiatives for Kids, the Environment, and Safe and Livable Communities by implementing goals and policies for the physical development of the unincorporated county in support of these initiatives.

Respectfully submitted,

CHANDRA L. WALLAR  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

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**AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**

**CONCURRENCE(S)**

<b>COUNTY COUNSEL REVIEW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Written disclosure per County Charter §1000.1 required?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>GROUP/AGENCY FINANCE DIRECTOR</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Requires Four Votes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>GROUP/AGENCY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>COUNTY TECHNOLOGY OFFICE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Other Concurrence(s):</b>	N/A	

**ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:** Department of Planning and Land Use

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**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:**



ERIC GIBSON, DIRECTOR

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**AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**  
(continued)

**PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:**

July 23, 2008 (23): The Board of Supervisors accepted the progress report and made a modification to the Board Alternative (Referral) Map.

August 2, 2006 (3): The Board of Supervisors approved the proposed Circulation Element map, with modifications, the proposed revisions to the Circulation Element framework, and changed to the Draft Land Use Map, with modifications.

May 18, 2005 (19): The Board of Supervisors approved the revisions to the Land Use Framework regarding non-residential land uses; accepted the Baseline 2005 Map with changes and made modifications to the Board Alternative Map.

June 14, 2004 (1): The Board of Supervisors approved the April 2004 Residential Baseline Map and a second alternative Land Use Distribution map, entitled Board Alternative Map for environmental impact analysis.

October 1, 2003 (4): The Board of Supervisors accepted the August 2003 Working Copy Regional Structure and Land Use Distribution maps for continued refinement and progress, with changes to specific referrals located in District 2 and District 5 for traffic modeling.

October 1, 2003 (4): The Board also directed the CAO to evaluate several land use scenarios for traffic impacts which included the following: Existing General Plan; December 2002 Working Copy map (with corrections); August 2003 Working Copy map (with corrections); Board Referrals Scenario; Board Referrals Scenario with modified Rural Lands densities (this scenario applies 1 du/40 acres to all Rural Lands designated at 1 du/80 acres and 1 du/160 acres densities); Board Referrals Scenario with reversal of the Forest Conservation Initiative (FCI) land use designations (applies general plan designations that existed prior to the adoption of FCI to areas currently subject to FCI); and Board Referrals Scenario with inconsistent pipelined cases.

October 1, 2003 (4): The Board also directed the CAO to return with a complete package that will include equity mechanisms; a comprehensive groundwater study for Pine Valley and any other groundwater dependent areas and to correct any mapping errors.

September 24, 2003 (1): The Board of Supervisors took action as recommended by the Community Planning Group on Referral 110: Semi-Rural: one dwelling unit/10 acres (northern two parcels) and Rural Lands: one dwelling unit/40 acres (southern parcel); heard testimony on residential property referrals from North and East County Communities, and continued the hearing to October 1, 2003, to hear testimony on residential property referrals from the Backcountry Communities and those speaking to General Plan 2020 in general.

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August 6, 2003 (3): The Board directed the CAO to process applications for Tentative Maps, Tentative Parcel Maps, Plan Amendment Authorizations, and Specific Plans submitted and deemed complete by the Department of Planning and Land Use on or before August 6, 2003 under the provisions of the current General Plan.

June 25, 2003 (1): Unanimous decision to support the direction of the General Plan 2020 project, and accept the following products for continued refinement and progress: General Plan 2020 Planning Concepts, Draft Regional Goals and Policies, Land Use Framework, Regional Structure Map, Regional Land Use Distribution Map, and Statements of Legislative Intent.

June 25, 2003 (1): Directed the CAO to return to the Board on September 24, 2003 with a list of referrals along with recommended adjustments to the map that consider properties with infrastructure, properties next to transit, properties that could be annexed, properties adjacent to higher densities, and properties with an overriding public benefit. The map should include staff, Planning Commission, Planning Groups and property owners' recommendations, and include input received from the Steering Committee, Interest Group, Planning Groups and individuals. Information is to be provided in a matrix format.\

June 25, 2003 (1): Directed the CAO to return to the Board in 30 days with a draft policy on pipelining and a review of the Interest Group membership issue.

June 25, 2003 (1): Directed CAO to refer development of the PDR, TDR and other equity mechanisms to the Interest Group, which should focus on broader infrastructure issues such as traffic, water, sewer, emergency services. Directed the CAO to return with recommendations for resolving the FCI issues, and to investigate the request by the Crest/Dehesa/Granite Hills/Harbison Canyon Planning Group to consider slope criteria for semi-rural designations as well as community-based design standards.

Progress reports accepted April 24, 2002 (3), January 16, 2002 (3), August 9, 2000 (11), May 10, 2000 (4), March 29, 2000 (6), December 15, 1999 (5), November 17, 1999 (7), June 30, 1999 (2), and February 17, 1999 (9).

September 26, 2001 (1): Directed the Interest Group to continue for the duration of the project.

May 23, 2001 (10): Directed concepts A, B, C and D be incorporated; authorized Interest Group work for additional 90 days; determined financial disclosures for Interest Group members are not required; directed focus on areas needing more attention (such as Ramona and Alpine); directed the appointment of two additional members to the Interest Group.

January 10, 2001 (1): Reaffirmed population targets and Regional Goals and Policies; endorsed Standards and directed additional Alternatives. November 1, 2000 (12), Approved amendment to Scope of Work and Consultant Contract. September 15, 1999 (8), Endorsed draft Regional Goals and Policies. August 12, 1998 (2), Approved and authorized Consultant Contract. December 10, 1997 (5), Approved Scope of Work.

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**BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:**

N/A

**BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:**

N/A

**CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION NUMBER(S):**

N/A